



CITY OF SHREVEPORT

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MAYOR

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**THOUGHTS ON MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DAY
JANUARY 15, 2024**

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. would have been 95 years old on Monday, when we celebrate his birthday. His impact on American life and his legacy of effective, peaceful protest still inspires us and influences our lives.

Some of you may know that Dr. King came to Shreveport several times to work with the people who were leaders in the struggle for freedom, equality, and civil rights. One of those visits was on August 14, 1958, when he spoke at the Galilee Baptist Church, just a few hundred feet from what was then a very segregated City Hall. He spoke to several hundred people who braved the threat of violence to listen to him. The movement in Shreveport was just beginning. Its goals were simple – encouraging people to register to vote, even though segregationist officials made that very difficult, and ending the practice of segregating City buses by race.

Dr. King gave a speech that night that is very similar to his famous “I Have A Dream” speech he gave five years later in Washington, D. C. The 1958 speech is simply magnificent. He told the crowd that freedom and equality would never be achieved without suffering, struggle and sacrifice. In Shreveport and throughout the South, that proved to be true. People who tried to vote, who tried to desegregate public schools and public facilities, were harassed and sometimes killed – but, ultimately, justice prevailed.

Those sacrifices and the persistence of those brave civil rights pioneers are what we celebrate today. Shreveport is a much better place because all of its citizens are represented on the City Council and in our State Legislature. None of that could have

happened if the voting power of all of our people had not been unleashed by Dr. King and the brave people in Shreveport who followed his lead.

As we celebrate Dr. King's legacy today, let us remember why Dr. King came to Shreveport all those years ago – to encourage people to register to vote. People in Shreveport and throughout America sacrificed, suffered and died so that all of us could participate in electing those who lead our cities, states and our nation. We honor the legacy of Dr. King and all those brave people who followed him every time we cast a ballot.

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